

Grace to You :: esp Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time

Preach the Word: Because It Sanctifies God's People

Scripture: John 17:17

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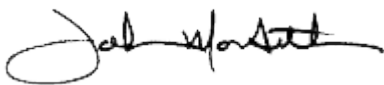
You wouldn't withhold food from a starving man. Nor would you deny air to a drowning child. Frankly, that kind of monstrous behavior is hard to imagine. But that's effectively what many pastors and church leaders are guilty of today, as they withhold that which is vital to the spiritual lives of their people: God's Word.

Pastors must faithfully preach the Word of God because it is the instrument that the Spirit uses to save and sanctify. We are born again by the Word of truth. As Jesus said in John 17:17, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your Word is truth." All comfort, all encouragement, all nourishment—everything—comes from the Word (cf. 1 Peter 2:1–3) through which the Spirit works (compare Ephesians 5:18–21 with Colossians 3:16–17). The Word and the Spirit are really inseparable in terms of ministry. The Spirit is the One who breathed out the very Word of God through the human instruments who wrote it (2 Peter 1:20–21), and it is His sword (Ephesians 6:17).

Leaders need to ask themselves what they want for their churches. Do they want their people to be under the sovereign and blessed authority of God? Do they want them under the rule and headship of Jesus Christ? And do they want them in the midst of the powerful work of the Spirit of God? If they do, the appropriate course of action is straightforward. Open the Bible and tell the people what it means, for the Spirit uses that truth to comfort and convict as it is conveyed to willing souls. It is even by the Word that He makes the unwilling, willing.

Pastors in particular ought to know and value the benefits that come from the study and proclamation of God's Word. Even if I never preached another sermon, I would thank God every day of my life for the sanctifying grace that has come to me through the daily study of His precious Word. Pastors, then, should study to know God, not just to make sermons. For me, the greatest joy of preaching comes not in the final step of proclamation but in the transformation of my own life, as the truth pervades my thinking throughout the entire process. A sanctified preacher, known as such to his people, is a powerful instrument when he opens the Word.

So then, we preach the Word to others because it is the instrument God uses to save the lost and to sanctify His people. We also preach the Word to ourselves, because through our own study of Scripture we are likewise sanctified. And we take our sanctification seriously, lest after we have preached to others, we ourselves might somehow be disqualified (1 Corinthians 9:27).



(Adapted from [*The Master's Plan for the Church*](#).)

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